

was gone. They had seen and talked with Jesus, alive and well, for forty days.

Peter and the others took up the torch of the gospel (good news) of Jesus and charged the Jewish people and the court (Acts 1-5) with the murder of their own Messiah. Like John the Baptizer and Jesus, they told men and women to repent - to turn or burn.

The Supreme Court tried to stop all this. They arrested Peter and John, the leaders of the church, and ordered them to stop preaching. In the face of the prospect of imprisonment or death they were fearless. Peter, speaking for the church, said in Acts 5:29-32:

“We must obey God and not men. The God of our Fathers raised the Jesus *you killed* by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him / to give the chance to repent and find forgiveness. / And *we are witnesses** to these things.”

Added to their courage were their CONVERTS. In the first five chapters of Acts thousands stood up publicly to accept Jesus, to be baptized and to gather around the Apostles to learn more about Him.

You say, this kind of growth in such a short time, is impossible. In fact, it is explainable. Think of the thousands of people Jesus had healed; add in their families and friends and neighbors and you can see that the harvest field had already been plowed by Jesus to receive the gospel seed. When news got out that He was raised from the dead they had faith He was the Son of God.

The Jewish leaders said they had turned the world “upside down”. Vance Havner said they turned it, “right side up”.

Becoming a Christian in that day was costly and dangerous. It could cost them their families, friends, possessions and lives, but they stood up the One who died for them and rose from the dead. Doing this requires certainty. Common sense tells us they had seen Jesus alive or investigated the claims of the eye witnesses and found them to be true.

The enraged leaders tried to stop it but couldn't. The simple fact, was: *all they had to do was produce the body by warning Pilate* this would become a revolution against Rome. They could have had soldiers drop the Lord's lifeless corpse in front of Peter while he was preaching and Christianity would have died instantly.

Adolph Harnack, a renowned historian, was not a believer, but said to be true to history he had to admit the first Christians *did* believe it. He said,

“The firm confidence of the disciples of Jesus was rooted in the belief that He (Jesus) did not abide in death, but was raised by God. That Christ was risen was as sure (to them) as the fact of His death, and became the *main article* of their preaching about Him”.

“Nobody would give up their families, their friends, their freedom and even their lives for what they knew was a lie.” Jesus is alive and we will all see Him one day as our Savior or our Judge.